Relaxed Specifications) 1998-99 crop year ex-Punjab to Assam against demand of local buyers. This rice has been procured in 1998-99 crop year and is within the PFA Standard Initially, State Government of Assam had unilaterally imposed a ban on supply URS rice without taking cognizance of the quality parameter FCI and this Department suitably intervened in the matter and impressed upon the State Government to lift the embargo on supply of URS rice. This matter has now been resolved and the supply of URS rice has been restored.

(b) to (d) In view of the above, questions do not arise.

Hiring private parties for procurement of foodgrains

2682. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to hire private parties for foodgrains procurement;

(b) if so, reasons therefor;

(c) whether it would not interfere with FCI's mandate; and

(d) whether the role of FCI is sought to be limited to buffer stocking only?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

New Foodgrain Policy

2683. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry is seriously thinking of introducing a new foodgrain policy to replace the absolute outlived present policy;

(b) if so, whether any consultation has been carried out with the State Governments and others;

(c) if so, the details of such consultations;

(d) whether Abhijeet Sen Committee submitted its report on foodgrain policy;

(e) if so, the details of the recommendations made by the Committee;

(f) if not, by when the Committee is going to submit its report;

(g) whether Government are thinking of giving direct income subsidy for farmers; and

(h) if so, the details of such proposals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) to (f) A High Level Committee (HLC) under the Chairmanship of Prof. Abhijit Sen the former Chairman of Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) has been constituted to formulate long term grain policy for the country. The High Level Committee has held meetings with the States of Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, West Bengal, Kerala and North Eastern States including Sikkim. Besides, the HLC held meetings with Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad and Reserve Bank of India , Mumbai. The HLC is expected to submit its final report shortly.

(g) and (h) The Government is examining the feasibility of providing alternative methods to benefit farmers so that they get the MSP for their crops. This is still in the nascent stage and no concrete proposal on this issue has been finalized.